



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL Committee Report

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Report of: Chief Licensing Officer, Head of Licensing

Date: 31st May 2012

Subject: The Government's Alcohol Strategy

Author of Report: Claire Bower – 203 7751

Summary: An information report to inform members of the new Alcohol Strategy launched by the Government recently

Recommendations: That member's note the content of the report and consider the content of the new Alcohol Strategy

Background Papers: Attached documents

Category of Report: OPEN

The Government's Alcohol Strategy

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This is an information report to inform members of the new Alcohol Strategy launched by the Government recently.

1.2 The strategy is attached at "Appendix A" of the report.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The government unveiled their new "Alcohol Strategy" on Friday 23rd March 2012 which is claimed to be a radical plan to turn the tide against irresponsible drinking and empower communities to reclaim their High Streets.

2.2 The government's alcohol strategy sets out proposals to crack down on our binge drinking culture, cut booze fuelled violence and disorder that affects our communities and slash the number of people drinking to harmful levels.

2.3 It is government's ambition that the alcohol strategy will radically reshape the approach to alcohol and reduce the number of people drinking to excess. The outcomes they want to see are;

- A change in behaviour so that people think that it is not acceptable to drink in ways that could cause harm to themselves or others;
- A reduction in the amount of alcohol fuelled violent crime;
- A reduction in the number of adults drinking above the NHS guidelines;
- A reduction in the number of people binge drinking;
- A reduction in the number of alcohol fuelled deaths; and
- A sustained reduction in both the numbers of 11-15 year olds drinking alcohol and the amounts consumed.

3.0 THE ALCOHOL STRATEGY

3.1 The strategy is set out in 5 parts;

- 1 - Introduction – a new approach
- 2 - Turning the tide
- 3 - Taking the right action locally
- 4 - Shared responsibility with industry
- 5 - Supporting individuals to change

3.2 Introduction – a new approach

3.2.1 This section of the strategy sets out the background information to how alcohol consumption as changed over the years, the cost of alcohol on the economy and what they want to achieve. (see paragraph 2.3 above)

3.2.2 Paragraph 1.5 of the strategy states that it wants to see a radical change in the approach to alcohol and an understanding that this can not be achieved overnight. This will require long term and sustained action by local agencies, industry, communities and the government.

This will include;

- Taking firm and fast action where immediate and universal change is required;
- Introducing a minimum unit price for alcohol;
- Consultation on the introduction of a ban on multi-buy options in the off trade;
- Ensure local areas are able to tackle local problems;
- Encourage partnership working;
- Stronger powers to tackle to control density of licensed premises;
- Introduce early morning restriction orders;
- Introduce a late night levy;
- Secure industry's support in changing individual drinking behaviour;
- Support individuals to make informed choices about healthier and responsible drinking; and
- Introduction of alcohol checks within the NHS Health Checks for adults.

3.3 Turning the tide

3.3.1 This section sets out how we might start to make changes and highlights three main areas:

- Reducing availability of cheap alcohol
- Alcohol advertising
- Responding to emerging issues

3.3.2 Over the last decade, we have witnessed a dramatic change in peoples attitude to, and the harms caused by, alcohol consumption. The government have estimated that in a community of 100,000 people, each year:

- 2,000 people will be admitted to hospital with an alcohol related disorder;
- 1,000 people will be a victim of alcohol related violent crime;
- Over 400 11-15 year olds will be drinking weekly;
- Over 13,000 people will binge drink;
- Over 21,500 people will be regularly drinking above the lower risk levels;
- Over 3,000 will be showing some signs of alcohol dependence; and
- Over 500 will be moderately or severely dependant on alcohol.

3.3.3 Paragraphs 2.4 to 2.11 of the strategy set out information around reducing the availability of cheap alcohol. This will include the introduction of the minimum unit price for the first time ever in England and Wales. Government are to release a consultation on this in the coming months with a view to introducing legislation as soon as possible.

- 3.3.4 Another proposal in this area is the ban on multi-buy promotions in the off trade, meaning that bottles or cans can not be sold cheaper than the multiple of one bottle or can. Again a consultation will take place later this year.
- 3.3.5 Paragraphs 2.12 to 2.17 of the strategy discuss the issue of alcohol advertising. There is a known link between advertising and people's consumption particularly with those under 18 years of age.
- 3.3.6 Finally in this section paragraphs 2.18 to 2.20 talk about responding to emerging issues. These include crime related issues such as alcohol duty fraud and health related issues such as the rising incidence of liver disease in young adults or both such as the growing availability of counterfeit alcohol.

3.4 Taking the right action locally

- 3.4.1 The government feels that local communities, services and businesses are best place to tackle alcohol related issues in there are and enforce the behaviour and develop the cultures that they want.
- 3.4.2 This section highlights five key areas to assist in taking the right action locally, they are:
- Changing behaviour at the local level
 - Challenge and enforcement
 - Rights and responsibilities
 - Working across boundaries
 - Evidence based actions on health harms
- 3.4.3 Paragraphs 3.3 to 3.8 cover the issue of changing behaviours at a local level and it talks about such schemes as Best Bar None, Purple Flag, Community Alcohol Partnerships, Pubwatch and Business Improvement Districts showing that a thriving night time economy can operate where excessive drinking is tackled consistently and robustly by business, police and local authorities working together.
- 3.4.4 This section goes on to talk about the potential benefits of locally elected police commissioners under the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Act 2011.
- 3.4.5 It goes on to talk about the new powers given to Licensing Authorities and Health Bodies as responsible authorities and the ability to review licences.
- 3.4.6 Paragraphs 3.9 to 3.13 concentrate on the issue of challenge and enforcement.
- 3.4.7 These paragraphs are about communities not having to tolerate alcohol related crime and disorder and nuisance; tackling underage sales and the potential to use the late night levy.
- 3.4.8 This part also spells out the potential benefits of the police and local authorities undertaking more prosecutions for the offence of serving alcohol to a person who is drunk.
- 3.4.9 Paragraphs 3.14 to 3.20 discuss the issue of rights and responsibilities.

- 3.4.10 This section concentrates on the issue of alcohol and its impact on the A&E departments such as workloads; costs and abuse / violence.
- 3.4.11 Other issues it mentions is about the potential for income from the late night levy funding a Police Officer post to be situated in A&E during these busy weekend periods.
- 3.4.12 The paper states that Government are to launch a consultation on a new health related licensing objective, so that the health harms particularly those witnesses in A&E departments, are a key factor in deciding whether to grant licences.
- 3.4.13 Paragraphs 3.21 to 3.23 look at the issue of working across boundaries and promotes partnership working and information sharing as essential good practice to tackle problem drinking.
- 3.4.14 Paragraphs 3.24 to 3.26 cover the final issue in this section which is evidence based action on health harms. Which discusses closer working relationships between local authorities and clinical commissioning groups.

3.5 Shared responsibility with industry

- 3.5.1 This section considers how the alcohol industry and wider retail hospitality industries play a key role in our economy. Well run and responsible community pubs form an important component of the social fabric of our communities and such supervision of drinking can help prevent crime and disorder.
- 3.5.2 However, it also states that too much of the industry still supports and encourages irresponsible behaviour through poor product location, under age sales, excessively cheap drinks and encouraging excessive drinking.
- 3.5.3 This section therefore concentrates on three key areas;
- Industry's responsibility to change behaviour
 - Supporting growth and responsible business
 - Cutting red tape
- 3.5.4 Paragraphs 4.3 to 4.10 concentrate on the issue of the industry's responsibility to change behaviour. Government are clear that it is the ethical responsibility of the entire industry to promote, market, advertise and sell their products in a responsible way.
- 3.5.5 The alcohol industry has a direct and powerful connection and influence on consumer behaviours and they know that;
- People consume more when prices are lower
 - Marketing and advertising affects drinking behaviour
 - Store layout and product location affect the type and volume of sales
- 3.5.6 Through the "Responsibility Deal" the alcohol industry has adopted a core commitment to "foster a culture of responsible drinking, which will help people drink within guidelines.

- 3.5.7 There many examples set out in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of some of the current initiatives / pledges made by the industry.
- 3.5.8 Paragraphs 4.11 to 4.13 look at the issue of supporting growth and responsible businesses. The alcohol industry contributes around £29 billion to the UK economy and provides an estimated 1.8 million jobs.
- 3.5.9 The final part of the section is set out in paragraph 4.14 which talks about cutting red tape. Essentially this is looking at reducing the unnecessary hops that businesses have to jump through. However, it wishes to maintain the integrity of the licensing system to protect society from those businesses that exploit loopholes to gain business at any cost, regardless of the risks to the individual and to society.

3.6 Supporting individuals to change

- 3.6.1 This final section looks at the support mechanisms and drinking habits of individuals. The sections concentrates on four main areas;
- Understanding the risks
 - Treatment and recovery
 - Mental health
 - Offenders
- 3.6.2 The key aims of this section is about how government can support individuals to change by;
- Ensuring everyone is aware of the risks of excessive alcohol consumption and can make informed choices about responsible drinking; and
 - Recognising that some people will need support to change their behaviour and ensuring that this is available, particularly for the most vulnerable in our communities.
- 3.6.3 Paragraphs 5.3 to 5.20 discuss the issues around understanding the risks. This section concentrates on the amount of alcohol being drunk, the impact of starting drinking at an early age and drinking cultures.
- 3.6.4 Some of the key facts include;
- More people under the age of 25 report getting very drunk than any other age adult group
 - 50% of students drink more than the lower risk guidelines
 - Under 25's also have the highest risk of being a victim of violent crime
- 3.6.5 Paragraphs 5.21 to 5.23 discuss the issue of treatment and recovery. This section stresses that recovery goes beyond medical or mental health treatment issues to include dealing with the wider factors that reinforce dependence, such as childcare, housing needs, employability and involvement in crime.
- 3.6.6 Paragraphs 5.24 and 5.25 set out the issues around mental health and paragraphs 5.26 to 5.30 discuss issues around offenders.

4.0 SUMMARY

4.1 The alcohol strategy sets out a clear commitment from government to address the harms of alcohol and to encourage responsible behaviour.

4.2 Individuals, communities, local agencies, local premises and national industries all have a role to play.

4.3 The following list sets out the issues / items we need to keep fully abreast of or respond to in the future;

- Consultation on a minimum unit price for alcohol
- Consultation on a ban of multi buy options in the off trade
- Consultation on anti fraud measure, including the introduction of fiscal marks for beer, supply chain and a licensing scheme for wholesale alcohol dealers
- Consider Early Morning Restriction Orders
- Consultation on a new Health Objective for licensing
- Consider the Late Night levy
- Encourage much closer working relationships with NHS, A&E, Trade etc.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That member's note the content of the report and consider the content of the new Alcohol Strategy.

Steve Lonnia
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SJL/2012

Appendix 'A'